

Presence as a First-Class Internet Primitive

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Abstract

Internet systems rely on foundational primitives such as naming, transport, security, and representation. This paper proposes presence as an additional primitive: the ability to verify that a real human is present in a bounded time window without identifying the individual, retaining history, or enabling tracking. The proposal is additive and complements existing web technologies by introducing a minimal, privacy-preserving capability for coordination compatible with modern privacy and automation realities.

1. Introduction

The internet has evolved through the gradual addition of primitives rather than replacement of layers. Presence is proposed as a narrow, composable capability addressing verifiable participation.

2. Defining Presence

Presence is ephemeral, non-identifying, non-accumulating, and context-limited. It answers only whether a real human is present now.

3. Relationship to Existing Primitives

Presence complements DNS, TCP, TLS, and HTML by addressing reality-aware participation rather than information delivery.

4. Ethical Boundaries

Presence must not enable tracking, identity binding, profiling, or monetization per individual.

5. Conclusion

Treating presence as a first-class primitive may enable new forms of coordination without replacing the World Wide Web.